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Poverty & oppression underlie Peru crisis

Daring rebel action catches Fujimori regime by surprise

By Mónica Ruiz

The daring and successful takeover of the Japanese ambassador's house in the capital city of Lima has focused world attention on Peru's Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA).

The MRTA, one of several revolutionary armies in Peru, took over the house on the evening of Dec. 17 in what the group called Operation Breaking the Silence.

Dressed as waiters, the rebels crashed a lavish party commemorating the birthday of Japanese Emperor Akihito. Hundreds of people, including members of Peru's ruling class and international and political elite, found their celebration transformed into an arena of class struggle.

Some 600 party-goers were captured by the guerrillas. As of this writing, the majority have been released, either for humanitarian reasons or for negotiating purposes. MRTA militants—described as young and extremely disciplined—continue to hold Peruvian Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, 11 ambassadors, the country's top generals and the heads of Peru's political police, including Gen. Máximo Rivera, director of the National Directorate Against Terrorism (DINCOTE), and Carlos Domínguez, former DINCOTE director.

The MRTA is demanding the liberation of 500 of its comrades languishing in prisons throughout Peru and an end to the neoliberal economic policies of President Alberto Fujimori's regime. It also demands repeal of the amnesty law that absolves paramilitary death squads, the reestablishment of union rights, abolition of the new land law, and guaranteed recognition of rural communal lands, according to released hostages.

U.S. and Japan intervene

Negotiations between the Fujimori government and the MRTA have been taking place in a climate of open imperialist intervention by both the U.S. and Japanese governments.

Outwardly, at least, the Japanese government has supported a more conciliatory approach toward the rebel demands, placing a priority on resolving the crisis without force. The U.S. has taken a more bellicose position, warning Peru's government not to reward hostage-takers by negotiating with them.

The Fujimori government has said it won't use force to resolve the crisis—as long as the MRTA surrenders. But it has stationed 900 police and special forces around the house and has cut off water, phone service and

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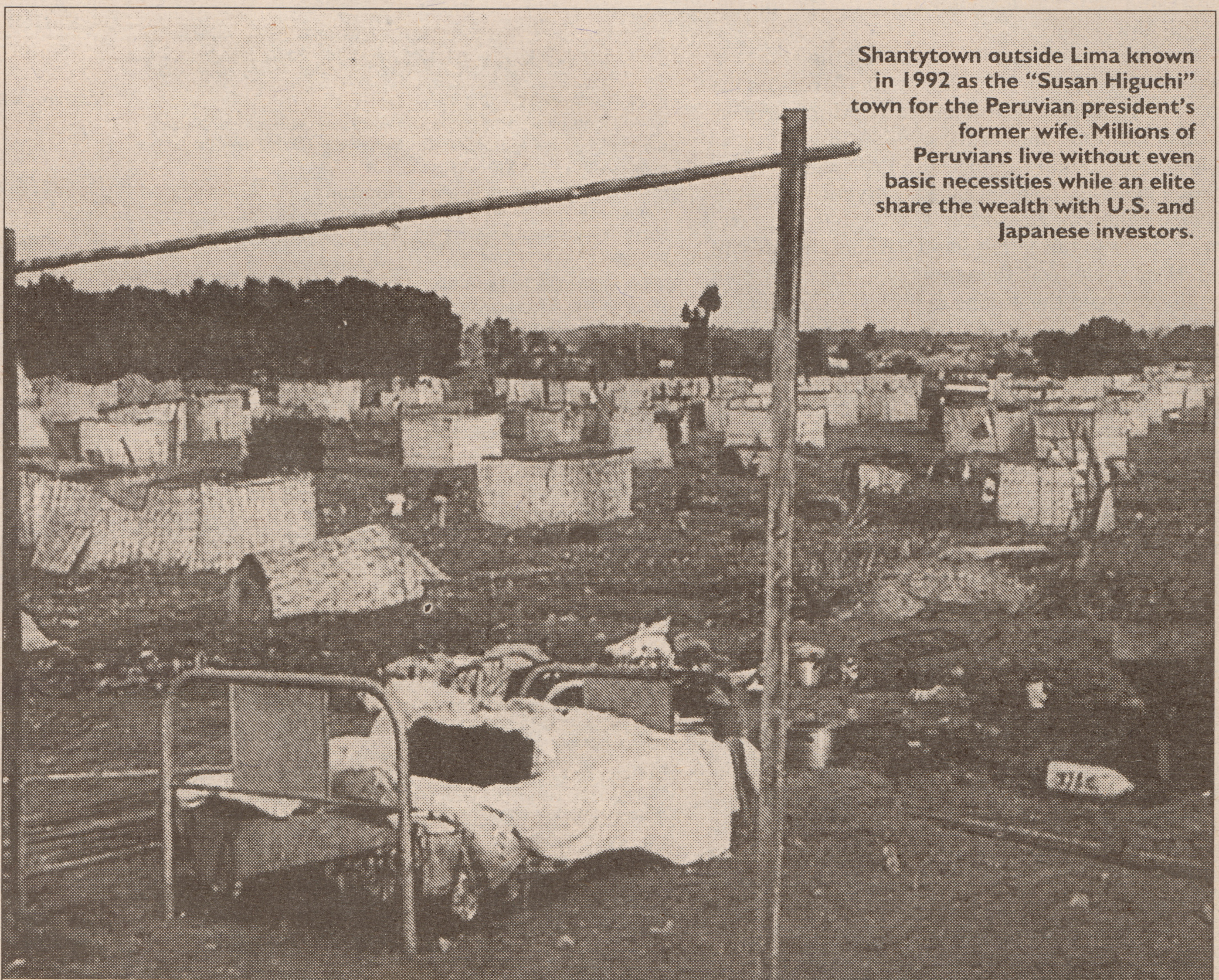


Shantytown outside Lima known in 1992 as the "Susan Higuchi" town for the Peruvian president's former wife. Millions of Peruvians live without even basic necessities while an elite share the wealth with U.S. and Japanese investors.

ATLANTA

Move against homeless draws protest

By Jimmy Raynor
Atlanta

The 1996 summer Olympics here spurred the conversion of empty office buildings and stores into high-rent downtown apartments. Now the business group Central Atlanta Progress is pressuring the city to clear the downtown of homeless people, citing various laws.

The first of these were passed before the Olympics. One outlawed "aggressive panhandling" and cutting through parking lots. Another prohibited "urban camping." The way this law reads, people who have nowhere to live and are sleeping in the streets and behind buildings do it as a recreational activity.

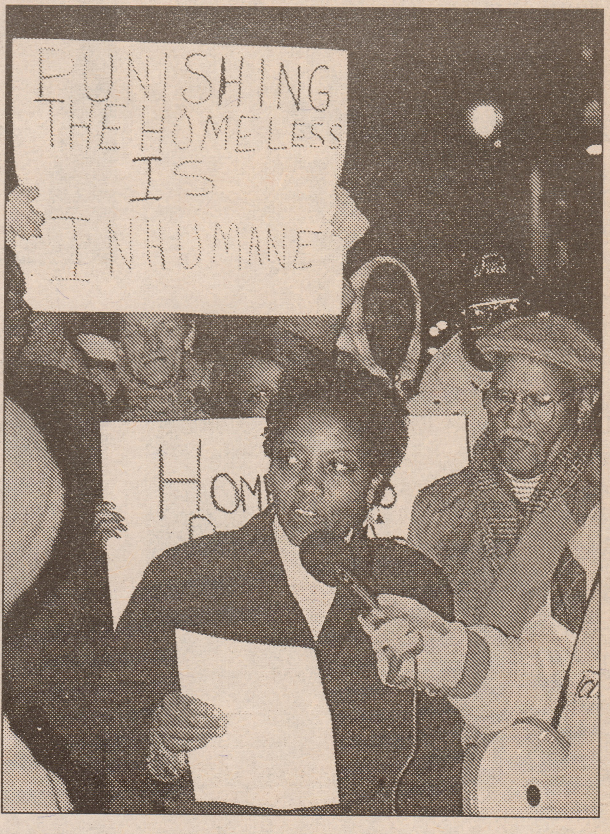
Nothing could be further from the truth. People are in the streets because the shelters are overflowing.

In downtown Atlanta over the past four or five years, parks used by homeless people to get off their feet for a while have been closed and remodeled. Day facilities have been shut down. The closer the Olympics got, the worse it became. Hundreds were arrested for things like walking through parking lots and "disorderly conduct."

Concerned Black Clergy and People for Urban Justice sponsored a rally and press conference on Dec. 17 in Woodruff Park, an area downtown used by the homeless before it was redesigned. About 75 men and women from shelters and homeless advocacy organizations gathered on a cold night to announce their resistance to the new laws.

The rally attracted wide media attention because it was the first direct challenge to the law. Organizers made it clear they planned to commit civil disobedience. Three were arrested after they refused to leave the park when it closed at 11 p.m.

Rev. Timothy McDonald, a leader in Concerned Black Clergy, told the rally that Atlanta is able to find money to build new stadiums, parks and put on the Olympics, yet it can't find money for housing. Rev. Moore, also of CBC, said businesses and white residents that fled to the suburbs 30 years ago now want to take the city back and drive the poor out. Other speakers said they were there to show they will fight back, even if they have to take City Hall.



New Atlanta laws would chase homeless out of downtown parks. WW PHOTO: JIMMY RAYNOR

PHILADELPHIA

Forum hits CIA and drugs

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The CIA, the cops and the government are responsible for the drug crisis in our communities, and they should pay to repair our neighborhoods. That was the popular sentiment at a public forum on Dec. 14 called by the Philadelphia National People's Campaign and attended by over 30 people despite bad weather.

Berta Joubert of the NPC described the effects of poverty and the added burden of illicit drugs on the area's working people, especially the African-American and Latino communities.

Joe Piette, a shop steward with the National Association of Letter Carriers, asked everyone with a relative, neighbor or co-worker who has become a victim of drugs to raise their hands. Almost all present did. Drug use affects the whole working class, said Piette. He urged the unions to protest CIA complicity in importing cocaine into our neighborhoods.

John Jones, former Black Panther Party member and guest speaker from the Jersey City All-Peoples Congress, described the long history of the CIA's use of drug-running to help finance armies of right-wing terrorists in other countries.

He emphasized the role of the police in selling drugs and imprisoning our youth, and that community control of the police is more needed today than when the Black Panthers demanded it in the 1960s.

Jones explained why drugs plague poor communities most of all. The scarcity of jobs that pay well, poor educational opportunities, lack of recreation and high unemployment reflecting racism and capitalism often leave youth with the tragic choice of low pay at McDonald's or selling drugs.

The meeting raised several demands: abolish the CIA; reparations to impacted communities; reopen and expand drug rehabilitation programs in all neighborhoods; jobs for youth at decent wages, not jails; money for schools and education; end the disparity and racism in sentencing; and an independent investigation with subpoena power to look into the CIA and drug trafficking, police complicity, and the money-laundering role of banks.

WW Calendar

JERSEY CITY, N.J.
Mon., Jan. 20

Commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sponsored by the All-Peoples Congress. 4 p.m. At St. Michael's Methodist Church, 37 Virginia Ave. For info phone (201) 433-2332.

NEW YORK
Tue., Dec. 31

New Year's Eve Party. Hip Hop hooray the night away in funk while you dance to the Latin-African rythms of Salsa and Reggae. Then Rock in the new year of struggle with Workers World Party. Food. Cash bar. Donation $10 ($8 fixed income). 9 p.m. until ?? At 55 W. 17th St., 5th floor. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

SAN FRANCISCO
Tue., Dec. 31

New Year's Eve dance benefit to help Cuba overcome the devastating effects of Hurricane Lili. Latin music and food. $10 donation. 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. At the War Memorial, 401 Van Ness (corner McAllister). For info phone (415) 821-7575.

STATE COLLEGE, PA.
Every Tuesday

Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal meets in the Paul Robeson Cultural Center on the PSU campus at 5 p.m.

Workers World Party

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If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

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NEW HAVEN

Yale workers win job guarantees

By Judi Cheng

Less than two weeks after a mass demonstration in which 300 strikers and supporters were arrested for blocking public streets in New Haven, Conn., the administration of Yale University bowed to the demands of its clerical and technical staff.

On Dec. 19, locals 34 and 35 of the Federation of University Employees announced they had reached tentative agreements for new contracts with Yale University. The pacts were unanimously recommended by the negotiating committees for the two campus unions.

The struggle at Yale has lasted more than a year. The main issue was that Yale University, a rich Ivy League school in an increasingly poor city, wanted to eliminate union jobs by subcontracting.

The workers waged a month-long strike last winter. They went back to work without a contract but began to wage a national campaign to gain political support for their demands. Last Memorial Day, thousands of New England trade unionists, civil rights and women's rights groups rallied in New Haven to support the Yale workers.

At a press conference, Local 35 President Bob Proto was enthusiastic about the new six-year pacts. "We have achieved an extraordinary victory, despite enormous odds for working families throughout New Haven. By coming together as a community, we have been able to stop Yale's plan to destroy decent jobs."

Local 34 President Laura Smith added, "We all have cause to celebrate today, thanks to the courage and determination of our membership and the heroic efforts of the clergy, elected officials and community activists throughout this region. These contracts offer the best job security provisions in the country."

The provisions of the new contract include wage increases averaging 4.7 percent a year for six years and curbing university subcontracting practices. No current or future employee in Local 35 can be laid off during the next 10 years. No workers can have their hours, labor grades, or classifications reduced because of subcontracting.

Local 34 employees in two departments where there may be future layoffs get extra notice and training opportunities.

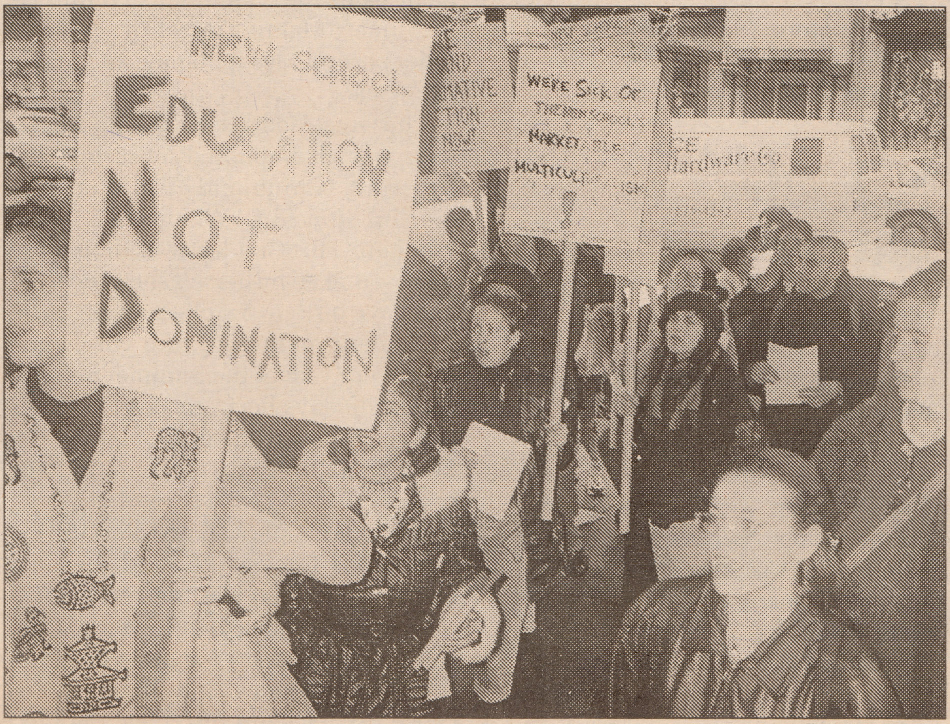
No subcontracting will be permitted in Yale dining halls. New employees in up to four fast-food snack units will also be covered by the union contract and have full bidding rights for other positions as they open up on campus.

The jobs of part-time workers who make up 75 percent of the custodial service department are protected under the new agreement from losing work to outsourcing.

Workers averaging 20 hours a week over a 26-week period will get benefits and a guaranteed minimum schedule of 20 hours a week.

Employees without permanent schedules immediately become part of Local 35 as a result of a 61 to 2 vote. All subcontract employees will receive a minimum wage of $7 per hour, which will increase by 3 percent per year over the life of the contract.

The new agreement also retains full health-care benefits for retirees and their dependents and improves the existing pension plan.



New School students hit university's hypocrisy.

WW PHOTO: KRISTIANNA THOMAS

CONCERN OVER ASSISTED SUICIDE

Disabled to protest at Supreme Court

By Brian Shea

On Jan. 8, disability rights activists will be holding a national demonstration in Washington outside the U.S. Supreme Court while the court hears two cases concerning physician-assisted suicide.

One case involves a doctor in New York state who wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine about assisting the suicide of a patient and was subsequently prosecuted. The other involves the constitutionality of a model assisted-suicide statute in Washington state.

The action's organizers, an umbrella group of activists with disabilities called "Not Dead Yet," are very concerned that any relaxation of legal prohibitions against assisted suicide could lead to the acceptance of outright euthanasia of disabled people.

Why is there growing concern in the disabled community as assisted suicide gains acceptance? Shouldn't people have a right to end their own lives if they want to?

Disability rights activists understand full well that some people who are terminally ill may want the choice to end their lives at a time and place of their choosing. They support the right to that choice, just as a woman should have the right to control her own body's reproduction.

The fear is that disabled people may be coerced or forced to end their lives.

Under capitalism, human life is measured in terms of dollars and cents, not what the person may have to offer to society. Giant insurance companies and health maintenance organizations are much more interested in the bottom line than in the health of an individual. After all, these are the same corporations that want to force women out of hospitals within hours of giving birth and that conduct serious surgery on elders and ship them home the same day, all in the name of cost effectiveness.

Disability rights activists fear that these greedy corporations might just come to the conclusion that it is too expensive to keep people with certain disabilities alive.

Heavy economic and social pressures could be brought to bear on the disabled people, their families, and even their health-care providers. And those pressures could potentially turn into legal mandates at a later time, requiring euthanasia for people with certain severe disabilities.

Disabled people need and want a society where people with disabilities don't have to be looking over their shoulders in fear of health-care choices. They need a society where they can live free of the current social prejudices that exist regarding disabilities.

Disabled people need a society where the profit motive cannot taint choices of who shall live and who shall die, and where all people can live to the fullest of their potential.

For more information about the Jan. 8 demonstration, contact Not Dead Yet at (716) 244-6599.

The writer is a disabled rights activist in Boston.

NEW SCHOOL

Students, faculty demand affirmative action

By Olivia Burlingame
New York

The fake commitment to affirmative action and diversity of the New School for Social Research was slammed here on Dec. 17 at a rally and protest held by the newly formed student group Education Not Domination.

The New School is seen as one of the most progressive educational institutions in the country. Many students don't agree.

A large, militant group marched to the offices of the dean and of President Jonathan Fanton demanding affirmative action and student power. They also demanded the school retain Jacqui Alexander, a radical professor of color whose three-year contract is close to expiring.

END members pointed to a gender discrimination suit brought against the university by Adamantia Pollis, a tenured professor of political science.

A federal court has ruled that the New School has violated the law with "an ongoing policy or practice to pay female tenured professors less than male tenured professors."

The students marched right into the university, demanding that the deans and president be held accountable for: 1) the number of students of color has increased by only 2 percent since 1990, 2) there are only five African Americans hired as full-time faculty, and only one has tenure; 3) there are only two Asian-American faculty, none with tenure; and 4) there are no Latino or Native full-time faculty.

One student told the assistant dean of the graduate facility, "This is our lives. It's not a joke. You have no problem with diversity when you hire maintenance, security and cafeteria workers. But when it comes to hiring radical faculty of color and paying them a decent salary, you forget all about diversity."

As the day of struggle moved on, people gathered at the student center for "Talking Back, Talking With," an END program featuring activists, poets and music.

Leslie Feinberg of Workers World Party and a fighter for transsexual rights spoke about solidarity and the anti-racist struggle.

Other speakers included Minnie Bruce Pratt, a Southern white author and anti-racist fighter, and Milton Neidenberg, who organized the Teamsters union at the New School.

Finally, at a press conference called "Faculty of Color Report: The State of Emergency at the New School," progressive professors spoke of the racist, sexist, homophobic and classist reality of the New School. One student said, "This is not over. We are just beginning. Until our demands are met we'll be back here every day."

Olivia Burlingame is a member of END.

FROM ISIS TO MARY

The Fall of the Virgin Goddess

By Joyce Chediac

Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Christmas are the most recent in a long line of festivals marking the Winter Solstice, when the winter days begin to lengthen and brighten.

While earlier pagan festivals celebrated the rebirth of the sun, or light, Christmas celebrates the birth of the Son. The Mother, who did the work of birthing, is barely mentioned.

Who is Mary? Why must she suffer in silence? Why is her hard work taken for granted?

Long before Mary, another Virgin birthed on Dec. 25. She was the one who was honored, not her son.

"The Virgin who thus conceived and bore a son on the 25th of December was the great oriental goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin, or simply the Heavenly Goddess," explained James George Frazer in his ground-breaking book "The Golden Bough."

Her name was Demeter, and her mysterious virgin birth was the high point of the Eleusinian Mysteries, wrote Elinor W. Gadon in "The Once and Future Goddess." She was called Isis, Kore, Nut or Hathor in Egypt; Astarte in ancient Palestine; Nammu or Ninhursag in Sumer; Mami, Tiamat or Aruru in other parts of Mesopotamia, and Mawu in Africa.

The Great Goddess or Divine Ancestress was also honored in Europe, the Americas, China and Australia, says Merlin Stone in "When God Was a Woman." This Goddess was thought so mighty that all by herself she conceived and gave birth to a son—a virgin birth. In ancient mythology, the young god dies every year at the Summer Solstice when the days begin to shorten. He is revived by his powerful mother, renewing nature and regenerating the crops.

Ancient people had no scientific explanations for weather and seasonal changes. Religion was their way of explaining and trying to influence nature. But religion can serve another purpose. It can be a window into the past. Because it comes out of society, religion mirrors how people organized their lives and what they considered important.

What kind of a society worshiped a woman?

A society that held women in the highest regard.

Matrilineal society and the Virgin

"Whenever the goddess is superior to the god, and ancestresses more reverently worshipped than ancestors, there is nearly always a mother-kin structure," Frazer wrote.

The time: from 75,000 BC to 1,000 BC. The place: everywhere. The religion: Virgin Goddess or Ancient Ancestress.

Life was hard. To survive, people lived communally and shared all property. Women's hard and creative work was highly respected. Women and men were social equals. Paternity was not always understood. Because women birthed children, they were credited with the miracle of life. Family name and possessions were passed down from mother to daughter.

But things changed. Over thousands of years, as people acquired more goods, mother-right was overthrown and replaced with a social system based on private property, slavery, and descent from father to son.

Frederick Engels, author of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," called this process "the world historic defeat of the female sex." Under the new system "woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children."

The fall of the powerful Virgin Goddess and her transformation into the humble Virgin Mary mirrors this change in social relations.

What Mary took from Isis

The time: 3rd Century A.D. The place: Rome, a decaying class society based on slavery. The religion: Christianity, a small sect.

Fighting to survive against more popular religions, Christianity incorporated their myths. The church adopted Dec. 25 as the official date for Christ's birth. This was already the day for feasts celebrating the rebirth of the Persian sun god Mithra, according to Frazer.

Christianity transferred to Mary the rites of the widely worshipped Egyptian goddess Isis, known as the magical birther. Karl Kautsky in his "Origins of Christianity" said that according to Apollonius of Tyana, a Roman, "the myth of the Virgin Mary is only an echo of the myths originating on the banks of the Nile."

"Ancient Egypt may have contributed its share to the gorgeous symbolism of the Catholic Church as well as to the pale abstractions of her theology," wrote Frazer. "Certainly in art, the figure of Isis suckling the infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child that it has sometimes received the adoration of innocent Christians."

Statue of Egyptian goddess Isis nursing Horus, ca. 2040-1700 B.C.

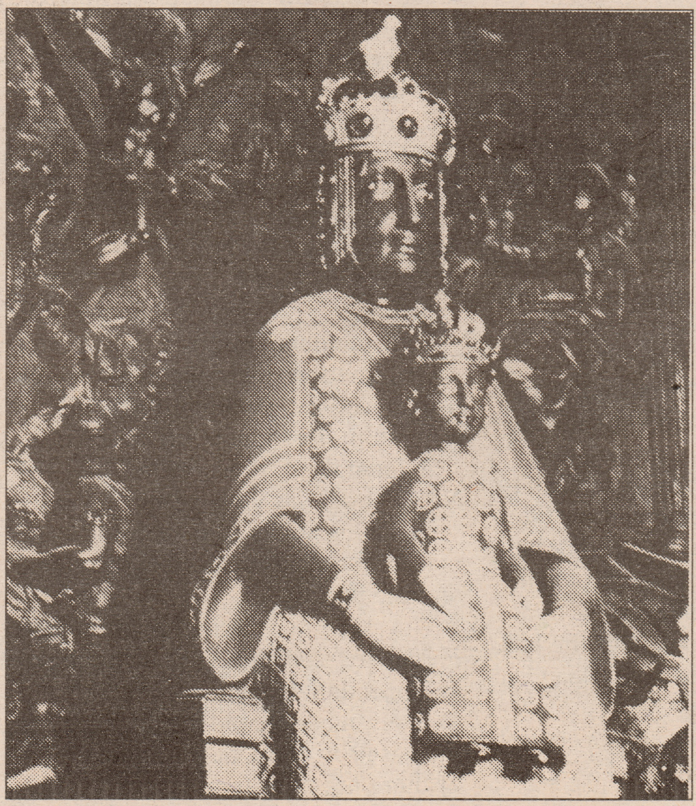
The Virgin of class society

The Catholic church reorganized older rituals and beliefs to reflect the property relations of the time. "God became the almighty Caesar of the hereafter ... tolerating no other gods or goddesses," Kautsky pointed out. Angels were divided into ranks, or classes.

And Mary? The Council of Ephesus in 431 named her Mother of God. She was given the robes of the Great Virgin, but she was no goddess. Under class society, the supreme Virgin Mother lost all authority to the father and the son.

So the Virgin Mother was redefined as an instrument of God and incubator of Christ. Her virginity no longer showed her power. Under the patriarchy it showed her value as property. She was self-sacrificing, powerless and passive, suffering, silent—in a word, oppressed. This is the Mary we know today.

There is a renewed interest in Mary today. She even made the front page of Life magazine in December, under the headline "The mystery of Mary." But Mary's story is not a mystery. It is a story of class society and its message to women of second-class status.



The 'Black Virgin' of Notre Dame du Puy in France. This statue replaced one burned in the French Revolution. That was believed to have been a statue of Isis given to King Louis VII.

New sites, old rites

It is no coincidence that rites to Mary carry much of the old goddess worship. Christianity grew by taking over ancient shrines and rituals wherever it preached the gospel.

France: The great medieval Gothic cathedrals dedicated to Mary were all built on ancient Goddess sites. One of the most famous is located at Chartres, where Mary reigned as the "Queen of Heaven." (Elinor W. Gadon in "The Once and Future Goddess")

In ancient Gaul, titles taken from Isis and bestowed on Mary included "Our Lady of Light" and "The Throne of God," referring to Isis as the throne that legitimized her son's rule.

Middle East: The blue cloak that Mary wears, and her title "Queen of Heaven," are symbols first associated with Astarte—Ashtoreth in the Bible—the ancient Canaanite name for the Virgin Goddess.

Mexico: Legend has it that Mary appeared to a Mexican peasant at Tepayac, north of Mexico City. Today, thousands go there daily to honor the "Virgin of Guadalupe." But in pre-conquest times, a temple and site of pilgrimage existed in the very same place to the Earth Goddess Tonantzin—"Our Mother" in the Nahuatl language. Some indigenous Mexicans still call Mary Tonantzin.

Asia Minor: The Goddess was called Artemis. Her shrine at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Christian religion says Mary spent her last years at Ephesus, and upon her death, ascended bodily into heaven from this place.

Italy: Mary replaced Demeter, the goddess of the grain, as the protector of the crop. The Madonna della Spica holds sheaves of wheat in her arms. By the late Middle Ages, stories of Demeter's grain miracles were set into Mary folklore. During the flight into Egypt, Mary on her donkey passes a field of grain and miraculous growth occurs.

The earliest known image of Mary, painted on the walls of a Roman catacomb, shows her nursing Christ, a motif adopted from the Isis and Horus imagery of Egypt.

Poland: The "Black Virgins" of Europe, including the patron saint of Poland, may well be remnants of the Egyptian Isis cult, brought to Europe by the Romans. Isis was a brown-skinned goddess from the Middle East, hence the "Black Virgins."

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DISNEY AND TIBET

Corporate culture tangles with China

By David Perez

COMMENTARY

Sometime in 1997, the Walt Disney Company will be distributing "Kundun," a U.S.-made, pro-Dalai Lama film directed by Martin Scorsese.

The Chinese government has said it will not allow the movie to be shown in China. Several prominent film and entertainment figures have protested China's decision, saying it amounts to censorship and violates the "free flow of artistic expression."

Several issues need to be addressed here. Let's start with the Disney company itself.

Is Disney just some genial, playful company interested solely in promoting artistic freedom? Does its desire to show "Kundun" in China have no political purpose?

Corporate power and censorship

With respect to the former, the Disney company is not just some genteel artistic organization. It is a far-flung media empire with connections to major corporations and banks the world over. Its influence is felt in virtually every corner of the globe.

It runs a huge movie studio, formed decades ago by entertainment baron Walt Disney, an anti-Semite who was notoriously anti-union. (See the book "The Dark Prince" for detailed information on the right-wing character of Walt Disney.)

In addition to its own major film studio, Disney owns several other movie companies as well. The company also directly owns 10 of the biggest American Broadcasting Company television affiliates. It acquired Capital Cities/ABC in 1995.

In the cable industry, Disney owns 50 percent of the Lifetime channel—along with the Learning Channel, ESPN, A&E and, of course, the Disney Channel. The company also owns seven major daily newspapers, over 30 magazines, 25 weekly trade journals and CapCities/ABC Books.

Far from enriching the arts, Disney's top officers are more inclined towards enriching themselves. Take Michael Ovitz for example. He was president of the company until a couple of weeks ago. His departing pay package: Upwards to $90 million.

That buys a lot of Mickey Mouse ears. It's also the kind of money that buys a lot of art. In fact, it buys the right to say exactly what works of art will and will not be produced.

This brings up the second point.

Through the sheer weight of its huge monopoly, Disney has enormous sway over how millions of people are "entertained." It decides on a daily basis the kinds of images it wants to project.

So, when you feel the heavy hand of Corporate America in entertainment, when you see the daily doses of racism, sexism and anti-gay oppression in the media—think of firms like Disney. They're responsible for it.

They're also responsible for you not seeing other stories and images—images that call for an end to police brutality against people of color for instance, or stories whose villains are exploiters and sweatshop owners.

In short, Disney and company practice corporate censorship on a daily basis—and it is a deliberate and systematic policy.

> Disney and company practice corporate censorship on a daily basis. For Hollywood to attack China for censorship is the height of hypocrisy at best.

So for Hollywood to attack China for censorship is the height of hypocrisy and arrogance. At best, it is terribly ignorant, not just about censorship in general, but of U.S. corporate and governmental interests in China in particular.

'Radio Free Asia'

On Sept. 29, Congress created a new "Radio Free Asia" that began broadcasts in Chinese. The broadcasts are openly patterned on the anti-communist "Radio Free Europe." The RFE was used to organize and foment counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The initial broadcasts are targeted at the Tibetan autonomous region of China. Their main message: to generate support for the former "god-king" of Tibet, the Dalai Lama.

The U.S. government has for decades promoted the Dalai Lama as a figure interested only in bringing "spiritual happiness" to China and the rest of the world.

But just as the Pope is a deeply reactionary political figure, so too is the Dalai Lama. That, after all, is why the U.S. ruling class is so enamored with him. Religious freedom and spirituality have nothing to do with it.

The Clintons and Gingrichs of the world love the Dalai Lama not because of religion, but because of politics, because of money. They see the Dalai Lama not as a gateway to heaven, but as a useful tool in their campaign to bring China back into the pro-imperialist fold.

Of course, there are thousands of well-meaning people who have fallen for the pro-Dalai Lama propaganda. That, however, doesn't change the political reality.

Ever since the victorious Chinese Revolution, the Dalai Lama has been agitating for a counter-revolutionary return to power in Tibet. Up until the time his rule was overthrown, the Tibetan autonomous region of China was dominated by a feudal hierarchy run by about 100 noble families and 100 monastery abbots.

The Dalai Lama ruled a Tibet of serfdom and slavery. At the same time he and the top clergy lived in the 1,000-room, 14-story Potala Palace.

The U.S. and other imperialist governments formally recognize Tibet as part of China, just as they also recognize Taiwan to be part of China. This doesn't stop them, however, from covertly agitating to carve China up.

All this must be borne in mind when the Disney company cries "censorship" because it can't peddle its wares in China.

Steve Schultz, 1953-1996

Pioneer in gay parenting

Steve Schultz, a pioneer in gay and lesbian parenting, died in New York from AIDS-related causes Dec. 14. He was 43 years old.

Schultz and his lover, the artist-activist Don Reid, were among the first openly gay couples to legally adopt a child in the 1980s. A photo of Steve, Don and their son Max Schultz-Reid is featured on the cover of the 1993 book "The Lesbian and Gay Parenting Handbook," by April Martin.

Schultz first met Workers World Party in 1979 at the first national march on Washington for gay rights. In 1981 he was an organizer of the lesbian and gay contingent when 100,000 people marched on the Pentagon to demand the U.S. get out of El Salvador. For the next decade, he was a regular volunteer typesetter for Workers World newspaper. Because of his speed and accuracy, he often typed nearly the whole issue into the computer system.

Schultz stopped this work in 1993 in order to take care of Reid, who was HIV-infected. Reid died in April 1994.

Schultz was a professor at the Bank Street College of Education. He was co-author of a 1992 study of parents, teachers and school administrators on the experiences of lesbian and gay families in the schools. He worked on another study, "Breaking the Silence: Lesbian and Gay Parents and the Schools," about the "estimated eight to ten million children being raised in 3 million gay- and lesbian-headed households in the United States."

The study says, "Gay families are usually described as a new family structure in the media. ... Actually, gay men and lesbians have always raised children. ... What is new, we believe, is that gay political and social movements are increasing the visibility of gay-headed families with children and that this visibility has encouraged more gay and lesbian adults to choose to have children."

Schultz was also co-author of a study on sexual orientation and early childhood education. It was published in the Summer 1996 issue of the Harvard Educational Review, which was devoted to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and education.

Members of his family have been very supportive of his life and work and are making arrangements for the care of his son, Max.

—Gary Wilson

Don Reid, Max Schultz-Reid and Steve Schultz. PHOTO: LISA ROSS

REBEL ACTION CATCHES FUJIMORI REGIME BY SURPRISE

Poverty and oppression

Continued from page 1

electricity, creating a severe sanitary problem.

The U.S. has rushed a team of "security advisers" to Lima. On Dec. 20, U.S. State Department spokesperson Nicholas Burns refused to comment on reports that the Pentagon has also dispatched a special commando called Delta Force from Fort Bragg, N.C., to Howard Air Force Base in the Panama Canal Zone for possible deployment to Peru.

The British government, working in tandem with the U.S., also sent a security team—reportedly elite Special Air Service "anti-terrorist" paratroopers.

Beneath the differences in approach to the crisis between Japan and the U.S. is their competition for hegemony in Peru.

While the U.S. remains the largest source of economic and military aid to Peru, Japan runs a close second. Japan has tried to use Peru as an economic beachhead in Latin America, making this Andean country the leading recipient of Japanese development loans in the region. Japan has an interest in keeping a modicum of peace and stability for its investments to continue flourishing.

Fujimori is of Japanese ancestry, reflecting the affinity between one section of Peru's ruling class and the growing Japanese presence in what has been for over a century within the U.S. economic sphere of influence.

The U.S., on the other hand, has tried to build stronger links to the Peruvian military under the cover of the so-called drug war. Using this excuse the Pentagon provides military helicopters and advisers to Peru—that can then be used against popular armed movements.

Another avenue for seemingly innocuous assistance is the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has been identified as a frequent conduit for CIA money. Peru is the largest recipient in South America of USAID funds.

Oppressed are exhilarated

The British news agency Reuter reports widespread support in the Latin American left for the MRTA action—which means that workers and peasants are celebrating this daring act.

Julio Marenales, a former leader of the Uruguayan Movement for National Liberation, known as the Tupamaros, said he felt close to any movement that wages a sincere struggle and seeks a profound change in the country.

Rina Bertaccini of the Argentine Communist Party charged that "The responsibility for this situation lies with the Peruvian government, which holds political prisoners in terrible conditions."

Marco Leon Calarca, spokesperson for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, stated, "The people of the world cannot sink into extreme poverty and misery without struggling. They have to defend themselves against the aggression of the neoliberal model."

By neoliberalism is meant the so-called free trade policy of the world banks that has forced so many indebted developing countries to privatize state-owned industries and open their internal markets to transnationals. This usually leads to the bankruptcy of domestic businesses and farms, with growing unemployment and misery for the people.

Glaring rich-poor gap

Over 50 percent of Peru's people live below the poverty line. The poor are overwhelmingly of Indian descent. Fully 54 percent of the population is Indian, with another 32 percent mixed Spanish and Indian.

The ruling elite, on the other hand, is white. This tiny, wealthy elite lives surrounded both physically and socially by an enormous mass of super- oppressed. The rich neighborhoods where the wealthy live are surrounded by gigantic slums known euphemistically as pueblos jóvenes—young towns.

This small elite has every reason to fear the world around it, given the difference in wealth, power and numbers. So they have demanded, and got, a government that delivers fierce repression of any who challenge their privileged status.

These conditions have inevitably led the Peruvian people toward armed revolutionary struggle. In 1980, the Peruvian Communist Party—known as the Shining Path—launched a military campaign against the Peruvian ruling class that had strong support in some of the most impoverished rural areas.

The MRTA, a Marxist-Leninist group that emerged in 1982, launched its first armed attack in 1984. It takes its name from Túpac Amaru II, the last Inca to lead a rebellion against Spanish colonizers in 1782.

Fujimori—a former engineer with no political background—was elected in 1990 as a reflection of the insecurity of the Peruvian elite. His election marked a break from the traditional ruling parties toward military rule administered by law-and-order technocrats. His tough, dictatorial stance is aimed at shielding the elite from the fury of the masses.

As the present situation shows, however, they can never shield themselves from the workers. It is workers who feed them, wash their clothes, cook their food, tend their gardens, and protect their palatial homes.

The revolutionaries who got into the ambassador's compound were dressed as caterers and came carrying champagne and caviar. Reports from released hostages describe them as young workers, women and men. Their leader is reported to be Néstor Cerpa Cartolini, a militant union official who was jailed in 1979 for leading a worker occupation of Cromotex, a textile plant that was being closed.

Consolidating his control of the country, Fujimori shut down the Congress in

Light at the end of the tunnel

In 1991, the Nicaraguan newspaper Barricada International interviewed MRTA leader Comandante Andrés about a daring escape made by his group from Canto Grande prison. Here are excerpts from that interview.

It's our policy to free compañeros who fall into enemy hands. We know that a Tupacamarist fighter who falls into enemy hands is systematically tortured. That's always the case in Peru. One of the members' fundamental duties is to look for any means of escape, once they've been taken prisoner, and it's the organization's duty to look for a way to free them.

The rescue of the compañeros who were in Canto Grande prison, which is Peru's maximum security prison, was conceived nearly three years ago. We saw the need to build a tunnel into the prison from the outside. When the rescue took place there were 47 compañeros, including eight women and Comandante Rolando (Victor Polay), who is the organization's commander-in-chief.

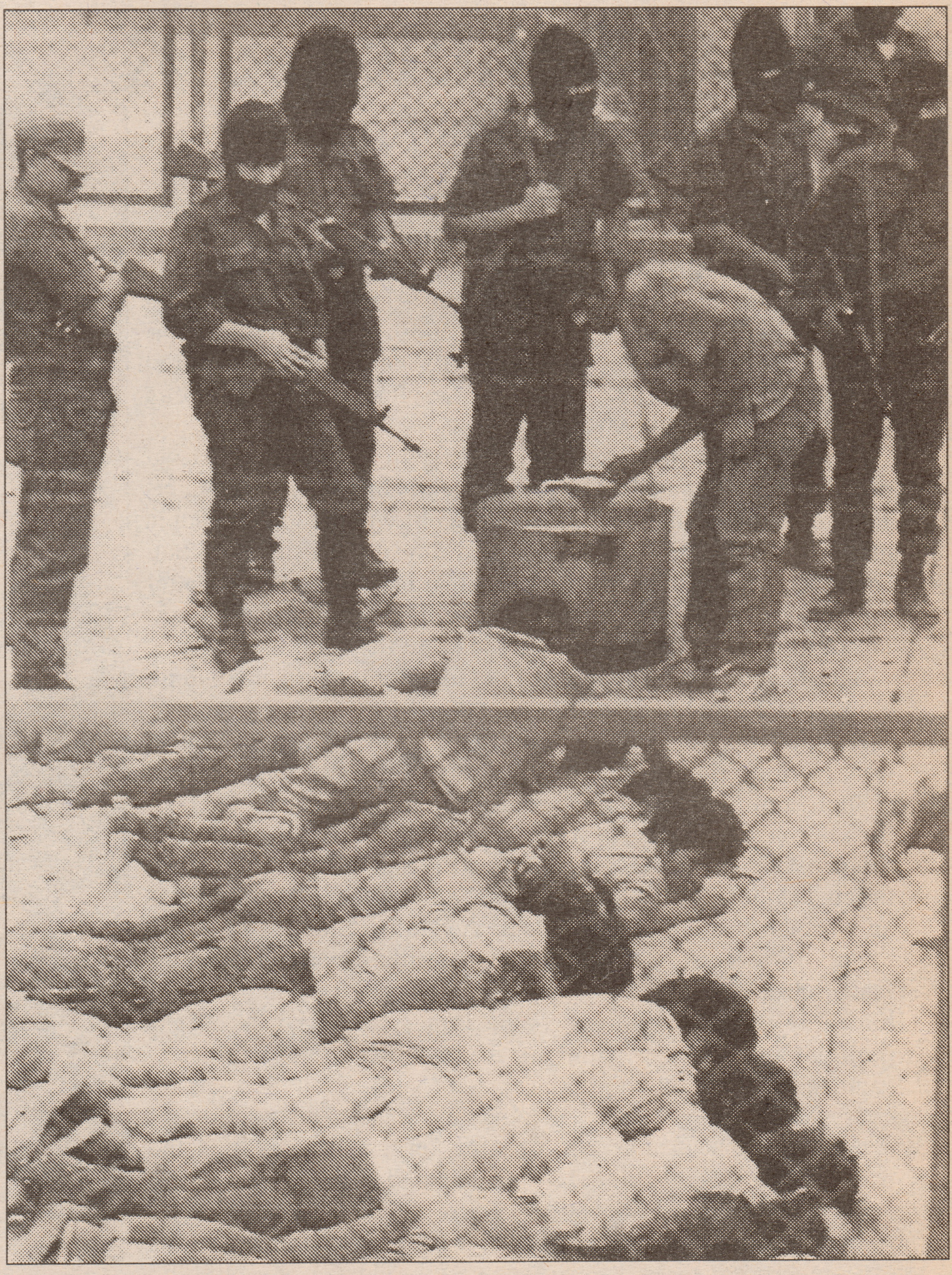
We built a tunnel 330 meters long. Approximately 25 compañeros took part in the excavation of that tunnel, under extremely difficult conditions. I think it's the longest escape tunnel of any Latin American prison, and maybe in the world.

An infinite number of problems had to be solved, like light, water, and ventilation, as well as coordinating the compañeros' escape, since they had Comandante Rolando isolated in one cell-block, the men in another and the women in yet another. There had to be very precise and decisive coordination in order to achieve a successful escape.

We counted on a great deal of the people's ingenuity. Peru is a mining country and there are mineworkers who have experience with tunnels and are our compañeros. Their participation was decisive above all in building a tunnel that wouldn't collapse, ventilation problems, etc.

Another problem was finding the right direction so we would come out at exactly the right spot inside the prison. We used all kinds of instruments for this, like a theodolite compass, and we tested our own ingenuity. In the end we rescued everyone.

All the compañeros who left—there were 47, plus one common criminal who slipped in with us—are now at their posts. Some are with the guerrillas, others in the cities, but everyone is in the revolutionary struggle again.



In May 1992 police commandos stormed this prison in a Lima shantytown and killed 35 prisoners accused of being members of the Shining Path

behind Peru crisis

April 1992. He then fired nearly half the Supreme Court and assumed dictatorial powers. Fujimori recently managed to amend the Peruvian constitution so he could rule for a third term.

Poverty and military dictatorship

After years of economic policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 80 percent of Peru's workforce remains either jobless or under-employed, according to a Dec. 18 Reuter report. Only one in 32 people have a telephone and millions have little or no access to medical care. Fujimori's standing in the polls has steadily dropped over the last five years.

In his campaign to decimate the revolutionary movements in Peru, Fujimori has given the military free rein. As a consequence, the prisons have been flooded with thousands of political prisoners.

In the last 18 months alone, the repressive anti-terrorism laws have led to 500,000 detentions—a figure disputing Fujimori's claim that the guerrilla movements have no popular support. Anyone arrested under these laws is sentenced within 24 hours by a military court administered by a hooded judge—giving rise to the term "faceless justice." The accused is almost always found guilty and is sentenced to long or life jail terms under brutal conditions.

These repressive conditions have made the prisons centers of political organizing. The MRTA's demand for the release of its leader, Victor Polay, and 500 other comrades has already thrown a spotlight on the brutal conditions faced by the thousands of political prisoners.

No matter how the MRTA takeover ends, the Fujimori regime has suffered a significant defeat. Its claims of victory over the popular movement are now seen as mere wishful thinking. The silence has been broken as the voice of pain and anger of the political prisoners and masses of the poor has been broadcast around the world.

Their valiant action is a signal to imperialists around the world: the revolutionary forces in Peru are alive and well.

'Free Peru's political prisoners'

Demonstrators at Peruvian Mission to the United Nations in New York on Dec. 23. The International Action Center called for "No U.S. commandos to Peru!" and "End U.S. support for Peru's brutal regime ."

WW PHOTO: JUDI CHENG

Perry promotes NATO strike force

By John Catalinotto

U.S. officials have raised the specter of a dangerous and illegal NATO military-police assault in Bosnia to capture Bosnian Serb political leaders.

A newly created police agency backed by the U.S.-led NATO occupation force would go into Serbian areas of Bosnia and take these political authorities by force.

Like the December 1989 Pentagon invasion of Panama that seized Panamanian leader Gen. Manuel Noriega, such an attack in Bosnia would endanger thousands of civilian lives.

U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry raised this possibility Dec. 17 after a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels. He said the ministers wanted a new international police force to hunt down what he called "indicted war criminals" in Bosnia.

The defense ministers were implementing the current plan to reduce the NATO occupation forces in Bosnia from 60,000 to 31,000.

NATO troops could fight population

At the news conference, Perry admitted that he and other NATO officials realized "that if a police force were out operating and arresting criminals, this could create a civil disturbance" and that the NATO troops in Bosnia "would have to deal with that disturbance."

In other words, the now-35,000-strong NATO occupation force could be fighting directly against the Bosnian Serb population, which is likely to support political leaders under attack from outside powers.

Also in Brussels, U.S. Gen. George Joulwan, the senior NATO military officer in Europe, said: "If trained police are empowered and have a mandate to go in and arrest war criminals, we would work with them." The same day U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Gen. John Shalikashvili suggested something similar in Sarajevo.

Danger of Pentagon intervention

As with every U.S. initiative regarding the Balkans, this one too may be delayed by the bitter rivalry between Washington, Paris, Bonn and the other imperialist governments.

However, even if the NATO occupation troops don't carry out the arrests themselves, such an assault remains a threat to the people of the region.

At this moment the threat is especially ominous since it coincides with a mobilization by the pro-Western opposition against the government led by Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade.

This opposition's goal, with much support from U.S. and European imperialism, is to complete the privatization of the Yugoslav economy. Nevertheless, it appeals to Serb nationalism and has already attacked Milosevic for abandoning Serb interests by signing the Dayton accords that allow NATO intervention and the partitioning of Bosnia.

This opposition could exploit the arrests of alleged Serb "war criminals" in an opportunistic way to broaden the attack on Milosevic.

The de facto war crimes tribunal that branded the Serbs "war criminals" is not a true international court of justice but a creature of the U.S. government and the United Nations Security Council. It has no moral or popular standing, and is simply a tool Washington uses against Balkan sovereignty. Specifically, it targets Bosnian Serb leaders.

In this instance the phony court provides an excuse to expand the active role of U.S. troops in Bosnia and tear down what remains of Yugoslavia.

NOTICE TO OUR READERS:
The next issue of Workers World will be dated Jan. 16.
Happy New Year!

BOSNIA TRAGEDY

The unknown role of the U.S. government & Pentagon

By Sara Flounders

Is a new Vietnam War in the making? The largest U.S. military operation in Europe since World War II is under way.

What's behind it? The hidden role of the U.S. and other Western powers in the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation and in the civil war that has devastated the peoples of the Balkans.

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AS ISRAEL EXPANDS SETTLEMENTS

U.S. demands more concessions from PLO

By Richard Becker

The Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans on Dec. 13 to spend hundred of millions of dollars to dramatically expand its settlements in the occupied West Bank. The announcement is the latest—and potentially most far-reaching—in a series of Israeli violations of the Oslo Accords, the 1995 treaty negotiated in Norway but signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington.

The Oslo agreement states that neither side should take steps to "change the status of the West Bank and Gaza" until "final status" talks take place next year. A major expansion of Israeli settlements would clearly "change the status" on the ground in the West Bank.

The pretext for this latest move was a guerrilla operation by a unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on Dec. 11 that left two Israeli settlers dead. The PFLP, along with other left and Islamic Palestinian organizations, has opposed the Oslo agreement on the grounds that it falls short of providing for an independent Palestinian state.

The Dec. 14 announcement by Netanyahu is just a continuation of steps, begun in June, to radically increase the number of settlers and settlements all over the occupied territories. The objective is to create "facts on the ground" that would make the emergence of a Palestinian state impossible.

The response of the U.S. State Department to Netanyahu's announcement was to mildly rebuke the Israelis while demanding new concessions from the Palestinians. Spokesperson Nicholas Burns said: "We've seen the Israeli statement and, frankly, it's troubling. Settlement activity is unhelpful and clearly complicates the peace process."

The settlement announcement, Burns added, was "seen to preempt the outcome of a negotiation."

Yet, five days later, Secretary of State Warren Christopher demanded new concessions from the Palestinians: "The Israelis have made some moves, and it's time for Palestinians to reciprocate."

These statements unmask the real alignment of forces in the "peace process." Rather than being some impartial referee, the U.S. and Israel comprise a team, working together—although not without some secondary disagreements—against the Palestinians.

Over the past half-century, the U.S. has sent hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to Israel. The Pentagon has built up the Israeli military, so that today it is considered one of the world's most powerful even though Israel's population is just 6 million.

This year, the U.S. will send $4 billion in military and economic aid to the Israeli state, far more than to any other country. Israel would face an immediate and severe crisis without this money.

So, if the Clinton administration really wanted to pressure the Netanyahu government, they certainly know how it could be done.

Concessions on top of concessions

The Oslo Accords provided for limited Palestinian autonomy in parts of the West Bank and Gaza. In exchange, the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasir Arafat agreed to recognize the Israeli state, which had expelled Palestinians from their land in 1948, and other concessions.

The new Palestinian entity was denied full statehood, the right to conduct foreign policy, and control over its borders. The majority of Palestinians living in exile were not granted the right to return to their homeland. Yet any Jewish person, born anywhere in the world, has the right to move to Israel under Israeli law.

The U.S. pushed the negotiation of the Oslo agreement after the collapse of the Soviet Union and defeat of Iraq in the Gulf war in 1991 had weakened the Palestinian bargaining position.

As the first step in the implementation of the agreement, Israel was to withdraw its forces and by March 1996 turn over administration to the new Palestinian Authority in the six largest cities of the West Bank. But Israeli forces have yet to leave Hebron, the largest population center.

Hebron has 150,000 Palestinians and only 500 Israeli settlers, who are heavily armed extreme rightists. Now the Israelis are making new demands to "assure the security of the settlers."

Israeli settlers from the Hebron area, many of them from the United States, have carried out repeated assassinations and massacres against Palestinians. They receive massive protection and support from the Israeli army. Invariably when conflicts arise, the 150,000 Palestinians are subjected to 24-hour curfews and are restricted to their homes, a condition never imposed on the 500 settlers.

The fascist-like racism of these armed settlers was illustrated on Dec. 21, when 200 of them assaulted Palestinian children on their way home from elementary school, beating them with belts and pulling their hair. When 100 unarmed Palestinians attempted to defend the children, they were attacked by Israeli soldiers who viciously beat them, arresting many.

Rising tensions in Mideast

Washington's real concern is the rising level of tensions in the Middle East caused by the actions of the Netanyahu regime.

A Palestinian Authority spokesperson called the settlements announcement "a declaration of war on the peace process."

The Syrian government declared that the region is "deteriorating toward war." Even the pro-U.S. governments of Egypt and Jordan have been strongly critical, with the Egyptian media stressing the theme of war danger over the past several months.

In Lebanon, resistance to the Israeli occupation of a 12-mile-wide "security zone" is rising. On Dec. 19, the commander of the Israeli forces illegally occupying Lebanon, Gen. Eli Amital, was wounded by a guerrilla mortar attack.

The attempt to "re-energize" the peace talks, in the words of chief State Department representative Dennis Ross, is motivated not by concern for the rights of the Palestinians but as a means to defuse rising tensions in this oil-rich region.

JAPAN

Unions support fired foreign workers

By Duane Sturm
Tokyo, Japan

Japanese and foreign workers united here Nov. 29 in solidarity against their bosses for a "sokodo" or all-day action.

The sun shone brightly as workers' footsteps fell on the streets of Shinjuku, in the heart of Tokyo's highest skyscrapers. It was no tour of trinket shops but a precisely organized series of marches and noisy demonstrations in front of a long list of companies targeted for their hostility to the welfare of both Japanese and foreign workers.

A group of labor unions including the Japanese Railway Union and several language-school unions coordinated 32 separate industrial actions. The hundreds at the actions had one thing in common: they were suffering at the hands of their employers.

They planned the Tokyo Sokodo with demonstrations beginning at as many locations as possible throughout the city. Using trains, buses or walking, the many groups gradually converged at pre-selected spots. The demonstrations grew ever larger.

With each meeting of separate unions, the spirit of the workers grew as old and new labor friends joined in the common struggle.

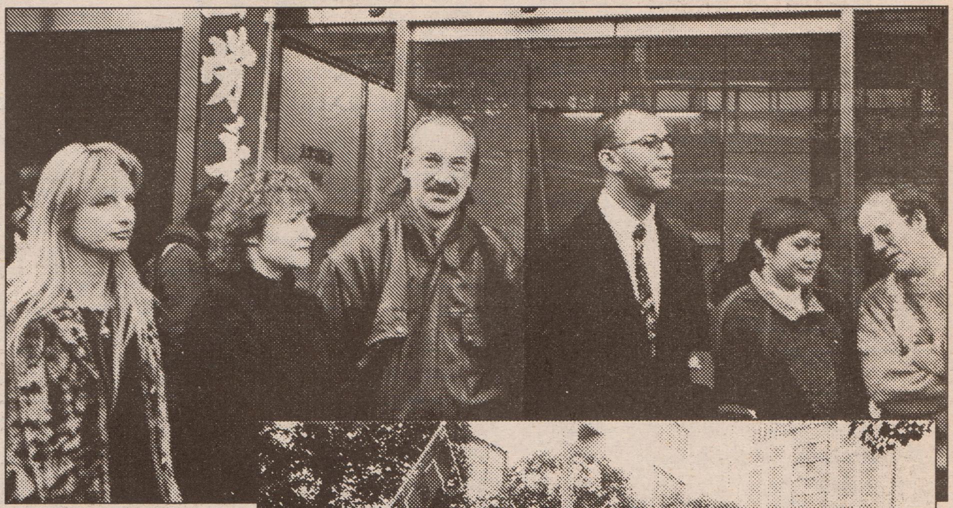
One group of English conversation teachers had been unfairly dismissed from their jobs. Some had spent 10 years with the company. As they walked to the Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank in Uchisaiwaicho they talked of their grievances.

The Tokyo Foreign Language College is refusing to bargain in good faith. A few months before it had fired eight leaders of the teachers' union.

Now the case is slowly winding its way through the Japanese Labor Commission. Max Woolerton, general secretary of the TFLC union, was confident that "it may take time, but we will win in the end."

Until then, the fired teachers are organizing regular demonstrations outside the school. They chanted slogans outside the bank because it is TFLC's financial backer. The unions demand that Dai-ichi Kangyo condemn the unfair labor policies of its clients.

The teachers joined members of the PAL Business College Union for a march on their institution, which also unfairly dismissed an employee. A large contingent of Japan Railway workers—victims of privatization of their once-publicly-owned company—arrived and were soon joined by foreign workers from Pakistan holding the banners of the All-United Workers Union (ZWU).



Japanese unionists (right) march in solidarity with fired foreign-language teachers (above).

PHOTOS: DUANE STURM

Two of the Pakistani workers shyly revealed horrible industrial injuries to their hands, inflicted by unsafe machinery at their factories. Both workers will be maimed for life.

As the sun sank behind the larger buildings, it cast huge shadows in the cold concrete canyons between their walls. Nevertheless, the pace of the marchers and volume of their chants was renewed as their numbers peaked for the final action at the Japan Railway main office near Tokyo Station. Speakers called for solidarity between workers of different companies, across national borders and around the world.

The writer is a former president of Sony Solidarity, the teachers' union of Sony Language Laboratory.

WORKERS WORLD

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MARCH

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AUGUST

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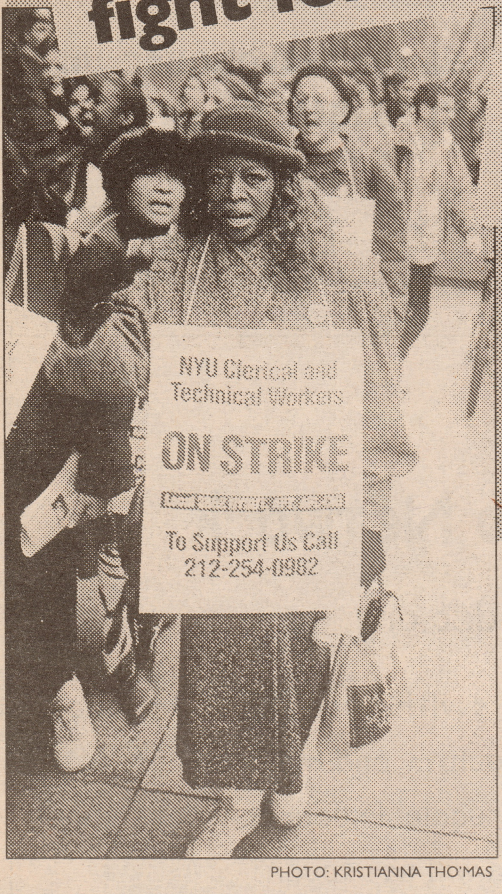
Immigrant workers fight for their rights
SEPTEMBER



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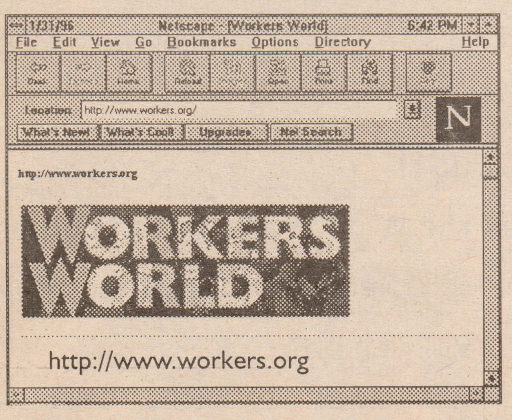

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editorial

Clinton drops the other shoe

It is a general rule of Washington administrations that the closer to the levers of political and economic power, the more likely a member or loyal servant of the old capitalist establishment is in charge.

This was obvious in the Reagan and Bush administrations, which filled their top positions with executives from the banking, industrial and military establishments. They were uniformly rich white males, usually of Anglo-Saxon heritage.

After his first election, Clinton promised to make the cabinet "look like America." This meant more diversity—at least in appearance. Some Black and Latino people, some women, were appointed. One post with economic clout—Secretary of Commerce—went to African American Ron Brown.

The racists in the Senate and the board rooms hated Brown despite his overall loyalty to U.S. big business. They just couldn't stand having a Black man in a position where he could exert his influence. They didn't mourn when Brown died in a plane crash while flying to the Balkans.

Clinton's appointments to his cabinet for his second term are in. There are no surprises. Many were active in his first administration. They are, if anything, even more to the right than his first cabinet, especially in the more powerful positions associated with state power and administration of the capitalist economy—State, Defense, Treasury, Justice, Commerce and Agriculture.

Of the 14 cabinet posts, three went to African Americans. These included Alexis Herman at Labor, Rodney Slater at Transportation and Jesse Brown at Veterans Affairs. Under current conditions, these jobs consist respectively of explaining to unionists why the administration won't help them, reducing subsidies to mass transportation and cutting services to veterans.

The one Latino in the new cabinet, Francisco Peña, moved from Transportation to Energy. As the Dec. 21 New York Times article so succinctly put it, he is going "from one sprawling, cash-strapped bureaucracy trying to downsize ... to another." Like the new appointees above, his role is to cut spending and benefits, not to spread the spoils of power.

Something to celebrate

When the New Year rolls around, so do memories of the youthful rebels of the July 26th movement riding triumphantly into Havana on Jan. 1, 1959. As the guerrilla fighters were greeted by rapturous crowds, the dictator Batista and his murderous crew fled with their loot, many to the United States.

Cuba then was still dominated by U.S. sugar companies and mob-controlled hotels and casinos. Outside Havana and a few glitzy tourist areas, rural workers lived in utter squalor, cutting cane for pennies a day when there was work.

The revolution has transformed Cuba, bringing free, universal health care, schools, culture, and new industries like biotechnology. What were once the poorest areas have benefited the most from new housing and public facilities. Cuban workers are fiercely loyal to the new system, as witnessed in the 1.3-million-strong turnout at last year's May Day parade.

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. ruling establishment has been predicting a similar fate for Cuba.

On Feb. 5, 1992, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told reporters that "Castro's days in office are numbered."

Rep. Dante Fascell, chair of House Foreign Affairs, told the same press conference: "[Cuba is] an economic basket case without hard dollars. ... The time is come to bring him in."

Rep. Robert G. Torricelli added his two cents: "We are witnesses to the twilight of the last Caribbean tyrant. ... I hope that in the coming months I can count on the support of all of you in the final chapter of the struggle against Fidel Castro."

On Oct. 3, 1992, President George Bush signed the Torricelli Law that made the economic blockade of Cuba even more onerous. "I'm very happy," exulted right-wing Cuban exile leader Jorge Mas Canosa. "I think the countdown for the end of Castro's days in power has really begun."

Also in 1992, Simon & Schuster rushed to get out the book "Castro's Final Hour—The Secret Story Behind the Coming Downfall of Communist Cuba."

On Nov. 18, 1993, Alexander F. Watson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, testified before Congress: "Cuba is a country at a dead end."

Torricelli was still hoping on Jan. 5, 1994: "The final period of President Castro's dictatorship is here."

It is now 1997. The "final hours" have stretched into days, the days into weeks and months, the months into years. The Cuban revolutionary government still stands, intact and true to its principles. The economy, so damaged by the loss of the socialist bloc, has made a turnaround. This fall, the U.S. could muster only two other votes in the UN for the blockade, against a record 138 opposed.

The Cuban Revolution carved out in this hemisphere a territory free of capitalist exploitation and national oppression. With all their money and guns, the imperialists still can't take it back.

Que viva Cuba y Fidel!

Workers around the world

COLOMBIA

Unions fight repression

Five thousand members of the USO oil workers' union began a work slowdown on Dec. 11 to protest the arrest of 12 union leaders. USO leader Hector Hernandez launched the action, labeled "Operation Tortoise," calling on workers to cut oil production by 50 percent.

The arrested union leaders were charged with terrorism and linked to attacks by the National Liberation Army (ELN), a revolutionary group specializing in dynamiting oil pipelines. The USO is threatening a general strike if negotiations for the leaders' release fall through.

On the day after the slowdown, the ELN carried out an attack on Colombia's second-largest pipeline.

The USO action comes amid growing militancy of Colombia's union movement. In November, members of the Colombian Communist Party won a majority of the posts in the country's largest union federation, the Unified Workers' Confederation (CUT)—including the presidency.

Even the head of the less combative General Confederation of Democratic Workers, Cervulo Bautista, warned, "We don't want to be accused of bringing down [President] Samper's government, but if the situation doesn't change we could be calling on the working classes for a nationwide stoppage."

GREECE

Week of protests against budget cuts

The Greek parliament passed an austerity budget for 1997 on Dec. 21. The budget includes $4 billion in cuts and increased taxes and is designed to bring Greece into the European Monetary Union by 2001.

The budget has been a lightning rod for working class protest. Workers and farmers have taken to the streets in daily strikes and protests against the austerity measures.

For over three weeks, farmers have crippled the country's economy with barricades along major highway junctions. They are demanding state subsidies for their products and cheaper fuel.

The barricades went up on Nov. 28 when farmers joined unions in protesting the proposed 1997 austerity budget. Industrialists estimated that the blockades had already cost the Greek economy $500 million, with exports down 42 percent because of blockades at the borders of Turkey and Bulgaria.

Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis has refused to meet with the farmers. On Dec. 21, farmers' leader Yannis Pattakis vowed, "We are tightening the blockade. Simitis can't even be bothered to meet with us."

On Dec. 16, unions again joined the farmers' protests. Beginning with teachers and seafarers, thousands of workers joined in strikes against the budget cuts. Doctors, custom officials, students, civil servants, airport workers and even diplomatic staffs joined the strike call by Greece's two biggest union federations.

Members of Panhellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) stayed off ships for the entire week, further crippling transport and commerce in the country. Port workers clashed with police and scabs trying to load and unload ships. On Dec. 20, the seafarers voted to call off their strike until Jan. 8, pending negotiations with the government.

THAILAND

Sanyo warehouse up in flames

Workers at the Sanyo Electronics plant in Bangkok, Thailand, staged an angry demonstration on Dec. 17 demanding higher year-end bonuses. Following the day-long demonstra-

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By Andy McInerney

tion, a nearby warehouse and office complex went up in flames to workers' cheers.

The fire destroyed the warehouse and an adjoining office complex. Company officials estimated the damage at $4 million.

The next day, 2,000 workers at the state-owned Krung Thai Bank staged protests for higher bonuses. Some bank workers held cigarette lighters, chanting "Sanyo, Sanyo." Government ministers came to the scene and eventually agreed to pay the workers a bonus of five months' pay—the amount the workers demanded.

The president of the Thai branch of the Japan External Trade Organization, Yoshiyasu Nao, said, "I am afraid the violence will discourage Japanese investors and also undermine our efforts to invite investors to Thailand. One act of violence can undermine one thousand efforts to invite investors to Thailand."

Trading of Sanyo shares on the Thai stock exchange were suspended for two days following the attack.

Twelve workers were arrested on arson charges, but Sanyo officials are facing allegations that they burned down the plant for a $112-million insurance policy.

BANGLADESH

Port workers win raises

Some 6,500 workers in the southern port of Mongla returned to work on Dec. 18 after winning better raises and benefits. They had been on strike since Nov. 11—five weeks—and had stranded 12 ships in the port.

Prison rebellion sweeps country

A week-long prison uprising ended on Dec. 22 when police stormed the Jessore prison. Five people were killed and 50 injured in the move to retake the prison.

Prisoners in the Jessore prison overpowered guards on Dec. 16 when they were excluded from a prison amnesty granted to 90 people to celebrate Bangladesh's independence. The Jessore prisoners demanded freedom and better food and living conditions.

On Dec. 20, prisoners in the southern Barisal jail staged a solidarity mutiny. Prison guards were called in from neighboring camps and the revolt was suppressed within several hours.

Within days, the rebellion had spread to Tangail prison near the capital, Dhakka, as well as Dhakka's central jail unit. But the Jessore prisoners held out longest, and when negotiations broke down, the 3,000 riot police surrounding the prison crushed the rebellion.

Bangladesh is estimated to have 50,000 prisoners—double the 25,000 capacity of its jail system.

BOLIVIA

Miners attack U.S. investment

Union miners and local peasant supporters in Bolivia battled with soldiers and riot police on Dec. 20 as they attempted to take over a joint U.S./British-owned mining camp. Leaders of the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB) charged that four miners were killed and 20 wounded.

The battle took place at a mining camp owned by Vista Gold Corporation in southeastern Bolivia. The secretary of the COB described the situation in the province as an "atmosphere of war" and warned that other takeovers were likely.

Gold mines were opened up to foreign investment by the government in April, a move that was opposed by miners.

IVORY COAST

Strike against racism

Shipyard workers in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in western Africa walked out on strike Dec. 18 demanding equal pay for African workers. Striking workers charge that the Ship Repair and Industrial Work Company (CARENA), a French-based firm, pays European workers more than local workers.

CARENA employs nearly 400 workers. In 1983 and 1986 workers walked out for similar grievances, according to the Panafrican News Agency.

IRELAND

Solidarity with political prisoners

With the holiday season, the Irish national liberation movement is calling for support for jailed comrades. There are over 300 Irish political prisoners and prisoners of war, including 32 held in British jails and three in U.S. prisons, according to the Sinn Fein POW department.

"The failure of the British government to engage in the peace process was never more evident than in its refusal to deal with the key issues of political prisoners," said Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams at a Dec. 18 press conference in Belfast. "Indeed, for Irish political prisoners in English jails, conditions have actually worsened throughout the period of the IRA cessation."

Sinn Fein is a political party committed to ending British occupation of the Six Counties of northern Ireland. It maintains close political links to the Irish Republican Army.

The Irish Northern Aid organization in the U.S. will organize vigils on Dec. 27, 28 and 29 in support of the political prisoners. They will ask supporters to send cards to the prisoners during the holiday season and throughout the year.

ARGENTINA

Unions hit MERCOSUR, labor reforms

Over 2,000 striking truck drivers blocked the border between Argentina and Brazil on Dec. 16. The drivers were demanding better working conditions.

Brazilian, Paraguayan and Chilean transport workers carried out solidarity strikes with the Argentinean workers on Dec. 16. Argentinean labor leader Hugo Moyano called the simultaneous strikes the first against the Southern Cone Common Market (Mercosur), a free-trade bloc composed of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile.

In Uruguay, unions called for a half-day strike on Dec. 17 to mark the "International Day of Struggle for the rights of Mercosur workers."

Argentinean workers also geared up to fight President Carlos Menem's labor reform decrees, signed on Dec. 19, which give companies the right to negotiate with individual workers—undercutting union collective bargaining. The General Workers' Federation (CGT) announced that it would organize a general strike on Dec. 26 against the decrees.

Millions of workers responded to the CGT's September call for a general strike against Menem's neoliberal economic policies.

PHILIPPINES

Hunger strike continues

Some 119 political prisoners in the Philippines are nearing two months of a hunger strike designed to win their freedom. On Dec. 17, two of them announced they would also stop taking liquids, putting them in imminent danger of death.

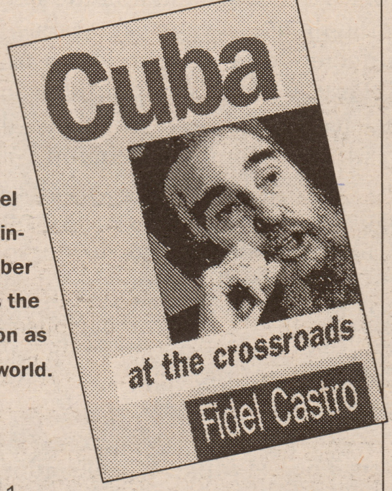
"It's a do-or-die fight," said a spokesperson for the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines. "It's either the government release all political detainees or watch them die for freedom."

On Dec. 9, six of the 119 hunger strikers collapsed and were rushed to the hospital. After treatment they immediately rejoined the hunger strike.

The Task Force estimates there are 179 political prisoners in the Philippines, most members of the communist movement.

Cuba
at the crossroads

A remarkable collection of recent speeches by Fidel Castro. In a series of speeches over recent years, including his address to the United Nations in October 1995, President Fidel Castro of Cuba discusses the main issues confronting the small Caribbean nation as it tries to adjust to a changing world.



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Detrás de crisis en el Perú:

Pobreza y opresión

Por Mónica Ruíz

La captura, atrevida y exitosa de la residencia del embajador japonés en la ciudad capitalina de Lima, ha enfocada la atención del mundo en el Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA).

El MRTA, uno de varios ejércitos revolucionarios en el Perú, se apoderó de la casa la noche del 17 de diciembre, y el grupo identificó la operación con la consigna, "Rompiendo el silencio".

Disfrazados de camareros, los rebeldes irrumpieron en una fiesta lujosa reconociendo el cumpleaños del emperador japonés, Akihito. Cientos de personas, incluyendo miembros de la clase dominante peruana y una élite político e internacional, encontraron su celebración convertida en una arena de la lucha de clases.

Los guerrilleros capturaron aproximadamente 600 asistentes de la fiesta. Hasta los momentos de este escrito, la mayoría de los rehenes han sido puesto en libertad o por razones humanitarias o por metas negociadoras. Los militantes del MRTA—descritos como jóvenes altamente disciplinados—siguen deteniendo al Canciller peruano, Francisco Tudela, 11 embajadores, la cúpula militar del ejército peruano, los jefes de la policía política del Perú, incluso el Gen. Máximo Rivera, jefe del Directorio Nacional Contra el Terrorismo (DINCOTE), y Carlos Domínguez, ex jefe del DINCOTE.

El MRTA esta demandando la liberación de 500 de sus camaradas languideciendo en las cárceles a través del Perú, y un fin a la política económica neoliberal del régimen de Alberto Fujimori. También demanda la revocación de la ley de amnistía que absuelve a los escuadrones de la muerte, el restablecimiento de derechos sindicales, la abolición de la nueva ley sobre las tierras agrícolas, el reconocimiento garantizado de la comunidad campesina, según los rehenes liberados.

Intervienen el Japón y los Estados Unidos

Se han celebrado negociaciones entre el gobierno de Fujimori y el MRTA en medio de un clima de intervención imperialista abierta por parte de los gobiernos de los EE.UU.

En la superficie, por lo menos, el gobierno japonés ha manifestado una actitud mas conciliadora hacia las demandas de los rebeldes, enfatizando el deseo de resolver la crisis sin uso de la fuerza. Los EE.UU. ha tomado una posición mas beligerante, advirtiendo al gobierno del Perú que no debe premiar con negociaciones a los que toman rehenes.

El gobierno de Fujimori ha dicho que no va a usar la fuerza para resolver la crisis—siempre y cuando el MRTA se entregue. Pero ha desplegado 900 policías y fuerzas especializadas rodeando la casa y ha cortado el agua, servicio telefónico y luz, creando un mayor problema sanitario.

Los Estados Unidos envió con mucha prisa un equipo de "asesores de seguridad" a Lima. El 20 de diciembre, el vocero del Departamento de Estado de los EE.UU., Nicholas Burns, rehusó hacer un comentario sobre los reportes que el Pentágono también ha enviado un comando especial conocido como Delta Force desde el Fuerte Bragg en el estado de Carolina del Norte a la Base de la Fuerza Aéreo Howard en Panamá para su posible despliegue en el Perú.

El gobierno británico, colaborando con los EE.UU., también envió un equipo de seguridad—según los reportes, soldados paracaidistas "anti-terroristas" de la élite Servicio Aéreo Especial (SAS).

Debajo de las diferencias en postura a la crisis entre el Japón y los EE.UU. está su competencia por la hegemonía en el Perú.

Mientras que los EE.UU. se mantienen como la fuente superior de ayuda militar y económica al Perú, el Japón es el segundo. El Japón ha intentado convertir al Perú en un punto de entrada económica a Latinoamérica, y volviendo al Perú en el país que más préstamos recibe en la región. El Japón tiene un interés en mantener algo de paz civil y estabilidad para que sus inversiones continúen produciendo ganancias.

Fujimori tiene antecedentes japoneses, reflejando la afinidad entre una sección de la clase dominante del Perú y la creciente presencia de Japón en lo que ha sido por mas de un siglo en la esfera de influencia económica de los EE.UU.

Por el otro lado, los EE.UU. han tratado fortalecer sus lazos con las Fuerzas Armadas del Perú, bajo del pretexto de la "guerra contra el narcotrafico". Utilizando este pretexto el Pentágono proporciona helicópteros militares y asesores al Perú—que pueden ser utilizados contra una insurgencia popular.

Otra vía para asistencia disimulada pero poco inocente es la Agencia para el Desarrollo Internacional (USAID), la cual ha sido identificada como un canal para conducir fondos de la CIA. El Perú es el mayor recipiente de fondos en América Latina del USAID.

Oprimidos alentados

La agencia noticiera británica Reuter reporte que hay apoyo amplio en la izquierda latinoamericana para la acción del MRTA. Esto quiere decir que trabajadores y campesinos se sienten muy alentados por esta acción atrevida.

Julio Marenales, un ex oficial del Movimiento Uruguayo para la Liberación Nacional, conocido como los Tupamaros, dijo que se sintió una afinidad muy estrecha por cualquier movimiento que libra una lucha sincera y que busca un cambio profundo en el país. Rina Bertaccini del Partido Comunista Argentino declaro que la responsabilidad por esta situación pertenece al gobierno peruano, que mantiene presos políticos bajo condiciones infrahumanas".

Marco Leon Calarca, vocero de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC, dijo: "El pueblo del mundo no puede hundirse en pobreza extrema y miseria sin defenderse. Tienen que defenderse contra la agresión del modelo neoliberal".

Neoliberalismo refiere a la política del supuesto libre comercio de los bancos del mundo que han forzado a tantos países endeudados en desarrollo a privatizar a las industrias del estado y abrir sus mercados internos a las corporaciones transnacionales. Frecuentemente esto resulta en la quiebra de los negocios y fincas del país, con una tasa de desocupación creciente y la miseria del pueblo.

Una gran brecha entre ricos y pobres

Más del 50% de los habitantes del Perú viven bajo el nivel de pobreza. En su gran mayoría los pobres son descendientes indígenas. En total el 54% de la población es indígena, con otro 32% una mezcla de español e indígena.

Por otra parte, la élite gobernante es blanca. Esta pequeñísima élite viven rodeada tanto física como socialmente por una enorme masa de super oprimidos. Las vecindades opulentas donde viven los ricos están rodeadas por gigantescos tugurios conocidos eufemísticamente como pueblos jóvenes.

Esta pequeña élite tiene toda la razón de temer al mundo que los rodea, dado a la diferencia en riquezas, poder y números. Entonces ha exigido, y obtenido, un gobierno que lleve una fiera represión a cualquiera que desafíe su estatus de privilegio.

Estas condiciones inevitablemente han llevado a los peruanos hacia la lucha revolucionaria armada. En 1980, el Partido Comunista Peruano, conocido como Sendero Luminoso, lanzó una campaña militar contra la clase gobernante, y que tuvo gran apoyo en algunos de las más empobrecidas aéreas rurales.

La MRTA, un grupo Marxista-Leninista que surgió en 1982, lanzó su primer ataque armado en 1984. Su nombre refleja el nombre de Túpac Amaru II, quien fuera el último Inca que encabezara una rebelión en contra de los colonizadores españoles en 1782.

Fujimori, un ingeniero sin ningún historial político, fue elegido como presidente en 1990 como reflección de la inseguridad de la élite peruana. Su elección marcó un rompimiento con los partidos dominantes tradicionales hacia un mando militar administrado por los tecnócratas de la ley y el orden. Su posición fuerte y dictatorial esta dirigida a proteger a la élite de la furia del pueblo.

Sin embargo, como lo ha mostrado la actual situación, ellos nunca pueden protegerse del pueblo. Son los trabajadores los que les alimentan, les lavan sus ropas, cocinan su comida, cuidan sus jardines y protegen sus hogares tipo palacios.

Los revolucionarios que se metieron a la casa del embajador estaban vestidos como abastecedores y salieron cargando champaña y caviar. Los reportes de los rehenes liberados los describen como jóvenes trabajadores, hombres y mujeres. Su líder se dice ser Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, un oficial sindical militante quien fue encarcelado en 1979 por haber liderado la ocupación obrera de Cromotex, un planta textilera que se estaba cerrando.

Pobreza y dictadura militar

Consolidando su control sobre el país, Fujimori cerró el Congreso en abril de 1992. Después destituyó a casi la mitad de la Corte Suprema y tomó los poderes dictatoriales. Recientemente Fujimori logro enmendar la constitución peruana para él poder tener un tercer período.

Después de muchos años de políticas económicas dictadas por el Fondo Monetario Internacional y la Banca Mundial, el 80% de la fuerza laboral del Perú, queda todavía o sin trabajo o sub empleada, según un reporte de la Reuter. Sola una de cada 32 personas tiene teléfonos y millones tienen poco o ningún acceso a los cuidados médicos.

En su campaña de exterminar al movimiento revolucionario en el Perú, Fujimori ha dado a los militares riendas sueltas. Como consecuencia, las prisiones han sido rebosadas con miles de prisioneros políticos.

Solo en los últimos 18 meses, las leyes represivas de anti terrorismo han producido unas 500,000 detenciones, una cifra que contradice las aserciones de Fujimori, de que los movimientos guerrilleros no tienen el apoyo del pueblo. Cualquiera que es arrestado bajo estas leyes es sentenciado en menos de 24 horas por una corte militar administrada por un juez encapuchado, dándole vida a la frase de "justicia sin cara". El acusado es casi siempre encontrado culpable y es sentenciado a largos períodos de cárcel o de por vida y bajo condiciones brutales.

Estas condiciones represivas han hecho de las prisiones centros para organización política. Las demandas del MRTA de liberar a su líder, Victor Polay y 500 otros compañeros ya han puesto a la luz las condiciones brutales que enfrentan los miles de prisioneros políticos.

No importa como la toma por la MRTA termine, el régimen de Fujimori ha sufrido una gran derrota. Sus gritos de victoria sobre el movimiento popular ahora se ven claramente que son nada mas que deseos. El silencio se ha roto, al escucharse las voces de dolor e ira de los prisioneros políticos y de las masas pobres en todo el mundo.

Su acción valiente es una señal para los imperialistas en todo el mundo: las fuerzas revolucionarias en el Perú están vivas y muy bien.